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A

LETTER

FROM

The Rev. Mr. *George Whitefield*, *K*

TO THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

Lately set on Foot in several Parts of

ENGLAND and *WALES*.

Wrote on Board the *Elisabeth*, Captain *Stevenson*,
bound from *London* to *Philadelphia*; and sent over
by him to be published for the Benefit of the School
lately erected among the Coaliers in *Kingswood*,
near *Bristol*.

One Thing I forewarn you of, Beware of Antichrist; for it is
Evil to be taken, as you are, with the Love of Stone-Walls;
it is Evil to have a Veneration for the Church of God, as you have
in Houses and Edifices; it is Evil to cry, as you do, Peace,
Peace, under these: For, is there any Doubt to be made, whe-
ther Antichrist will fix his Seat in these? To me, Mountains,
and Forests, and Fens, and Prisons, and Pits, are the safer
Places; for in these it was that the Prophets, either waiting for,
or being actually overwhelmed with the Spirit of God, prophesied,
or spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

See St. Hilary's Works, Paris Edition, Page 316.

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ling*. MDCCXL.





A
LETTER
TO THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.

HEBREWS X. 23.

* *Having been washed in the Body, with pure Water, let us hold fast the mutual and uniform Profession of the Hope, without wavering : For he is faithful that hath promised.*

My dear Brethren in Christ,

THE Apostle to the *Hebrews* † having exhorted them to a full Assurance of Faith, and stedfast Confidence of Hope, that they might also abound in Love towards God, and consequently in good Works one towards another, and towards all Men, thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost, insists upon their continuing to *assemble* themselves together,

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* So it ought to be rendred, See the Original.

† *Heb. x. 22, 23, 24, 25.*

notwithstanding the Persecutions that arose because of the Word, as a most necessary Means of promoting that careful Concern for each other, without which they could not stir up the Gift of God that was in them, nor administer that mutual Consolation and Support, which was so much the more necessary, as the Day of their fiery Trial (when they were *to resist even unto Blood* *) was now evidently approaching nearer and nearer unto them.

The primitive Saints, Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors, being every where spoken against †, and persecuted from City to City, it is plain, past all Controversy, that the *Assemblies* here intended and enjoined by the Apostle, were not such as are our allowed and publick Meetings in the Churches, but little private Societies or Congregations, by the Apostles every where called Churches, whether assembling together ‡ in Houses, or ** in Deserts, or Mountains, or Dens, or Caves of the Earth ; for in *these*, more especially, it *ever* was, that those holy Men of God, of whom the World was not worthy ††, spake as they were moved ‡‡ (that is, powerfully constrained, and carried on so to do) by the Holy Ghost.

If the Apostle's Exhortation and Injunction, which is founded on those faithful Sayings of our Lord*,

* Heb. xii. 4.

† Acts xxviii. 22.

‡ Rom. xvi. 5, 23. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. ii, &c.

** Heb. xi. 38, &c.

†† Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elias, &c. John the Baptist, the Apostles, &c. St. Hilary, &c. who were forced out of their own Churches, and compelled to cry aloud in the Fields and Forests, &c. (See Motto in the Title.)

‡‡ 2 Pet. i. 21. Eph. iv. 14. Jude xii. carried or driven, as Clouds by the Wind, John iii. 8.

Lord*, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World, and, where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the Midst of them, was so necessary for the Maintenance of the common Faith, and Hope, and Love among the Christians of the first and purest Age, how much more so must it be thought for us who live in these latter evil Days, wherein Faith is scarcely to be found upon the Earth, and the Love of many is waxed so cold, that we may, with all Reason, expect that the last and final Day of Apostacy and Persecution draweth nigh, according to the Scriptures !

Already it is most manifest unto all Men, and they cannot deny it, that while Masquerades, Balls, Plays, Horse-Races, and such like polite, tho' diabolical Entertainments, are countenanced and supported even by publick Authority, so that few (if any) have as yet had Courage to speak, preach, or write, for the suppressing them, so plainly and publicly as they ought, if the Children of God meet, (as they were required) to build up each other in their most holy Faith, almost every one's Mouth is opened against them : Nay, (with Grief it must be spoken) even most of our Masters in *Israel*, who ought to be Patterns and Promoters of every good Word and Work, are not content with countenancing the polite and sinful Diversions of the Age by their Presence and Approbation, but are generally (as it were in Defence of this their Conduct) most active in saying all Manner of Evil, with all Falshood and Bitterness, against religious

* *Matth.* xxviii. 20. and xviii. 20.

ous Societies, condemning such especially as have any Tendency to promote the Power of Godliness among Men, as schismatical, seditious, and tending to destroy the present established Constitution, &c.

For these, and many such like Reasons, as present with you in Spirit, tho' absent in Body, I thought it my Duty to stir you up, by putting you in Remembrance, zealously to persist in your Obedience to the forementioned Injunction once delivered to the Saints, and so much the more, as, in all Probability, the *Time will soon come, when Judgment must begin at the House of God* †; nay, *the Judge is already even at the Door.*

The Lord of the Harvest has been pleased to bless us with a Time of gathering in, and undoubtedly a winnowing Time will come; his Fan is already in his Hand, yet a little While, and (if the Work lately begun be carried on, and perfected, I am persuaded) he will thoroughly purge his Floor. The Shepherds must first be smitten; next, Endeavours will be exerted to scatter the Sheep. My Brethren, watch and pray one for another, that you may be enabled to stand in the evil Day, and having done all to stand. For this End it was that the first Christians so frequently assembled themselves together, tho' obliged to shut the Doors for fear of the *Jews, &c.* and their continuing thus in Fellowship or Communion with each other, whilst the Blood of Jesus Christ cleansed them from all Sin, was one main Reason why they also continued steadfast in the mutual and uniform Profession of
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that one Faith, and Hope, and Love, whereinto they had been baptized.

Take then, my Brethren, the primitive Christians for your Ensamples; and while you endeavour, in all Things, to follow them as they did Christ, no Power upon Earth can (lawfully) forbid or hinder you; but, and it such Necessity be laid upon you, that you must obey God, and not Man. I trust, even then also, it will be given you to *do so*, in such Ways, as that all Men may know whose Disciples you are, and you may glorify God in the Day of your Visitation. In the mean Time, while you are yet but a little Remove from the usual formal Way, which bringeth not Glory to God, nor his Goodness down unto Men, tho' some blind Zealots, Leaders of the Blind, may continue in lying, whilst they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, concerning you, and this because *they love not the Truth*, yet, while you *fear God*, and truly *honour the King*, and are of the Number of those who are quiet in the Land, there is no one Reason can be urged against your *assembling*, which will not equally hold good against *all assembling together* for religious Purposes. In this Respect, therefore, a private Prelate has no more Authority than a private Presbyter; and, if it be lawful for more than five Persons to meet in a private Vestry, it is equally lawful for more than five to meet in a private House; provided always, that no Person presume to take upon himself any Office, in respect of such Assemblies, whereto he is not called of God, as well as approved of Men; and yet this is the Practice of those called the *Twelve Stewards*, who pretend to visit
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and oversee Societies, as if indeed their Office were no less than that of a Bishop, (*that is, one who hath the Oversight and Care of the Churches*) or, at least, that they were none other than Deputies of the Bishop of London, from whom they derive their Power and Authority so to proceed, perhaps without any due Qualification for so doing.

If it be enquired of you, by what Authority you use sometimes to pray, without premeditating a certain Form of Words, you may with much more Reason and Authority demand, How dare any Person pretend much Zeal for the Church, who will yet presume to read the Church-Prayers, tho' noways commissioned or impowered so to do, and that in any Place but the Church, where *only* they are appointed to be read? And as in this, so in every Thing, I trust you will be enabled, by the Meekness and Wisdom of Jesus Christ, to overcome the Ignorance, and silence, the Evil-speaking, Lying, and Slandering of your Adversaries, and to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. It is evident, that the Church of England does not confine her Members to the Use of *any* Form of Prayer, but *that* which is appointed by publick Authority, and that *only* to be ready by such Persons, in such Places, and at such Times, as are in like Manner allowed and appointed: In private Assemblies, such as yours, all are left to their Liberty; and therefore, as many as censure, or would hinder you in this, at once discover their pitiable Ignorance of that Constitution they pretend to promote, as well as their unhappy Estrangement from the Spirit and Privileges of
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the Gospel ; but those who will still most obstinately refuse to be saved from the Guilt of such Folly and Wretchedness, by what Names or Titles soever dignified and distinguished for a Time, will very soon become eternal Objects of Contempt and Abhorrence, both to Men and Angels.

Let us ever * *pray that we may be delivered from all such unreasonable and wicked Men ; and that they also, with us, may be delivered from the Wrath to come. Amen.*

How to improve your coming together, so as may best promote the Glory of God, (which is the Salvation of Souls) as it is *my* next, so it ought to be *your* constant and chief Concern ; for, as Christians in general, so Members of religious Societies in particular, are, and ought to be like Cities set upon an Hill ; and therefore it highly concerns you so to let your Light shine before Men, that they seeing your Works of Faith, and Labours of Love, and Patience of Hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, may glorify God, even our Father which is in Heaven. And here, supposing you to have begun well, the most important Caution I can give you, is, by no Means to suffer any one to be admitted, or continued in Fellowship with you, who has not, or does not continue to have that Fellowship with Christ, of which *this* ought ever to be the certain Pledge and Sign. It was the Neglect of this *one* Thing needful that defiled the holy Place of the Tabernacle of the Most Highest, even almost as soon as the Foundation was laid by Jesus Christ and his Apostles ; it was the same Neglect, that

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at length brought in all Manner of Abominations, even into the most holy Place; and it is still the same, that has, now at last, made desolate the City and the Temple of God, so that there is not so much as one Stone to be seen left upon another. I exhort and entreat you therefore, first of all, to examine yourselves again and again, and to prove your own selves, whether Jesus Christ be in you, and you in him; that you may find and know of your own selves, (as I trust ye will) that ye are not Reprobates, but that ye abide stedfast in the Faith, and are rooted and grounded in Love, that ye may grow up into him in all Things, which is the Head, even Jesus Christ, and rejoice evermore in the full Assurance of Hope unto the End, that ye may be mutual Partakers of that *Fulness* of *him*, which filleth all in all. And, in the *next* Place, I most earnestly beseech you to examine others also, and prove all, as many as desire to have any Fellowship with you, in like Manner; not receiving them into your Brotherhood, till you have the proper Evidence and Assurance that they are indeed prepared of God to be Partakers with you of an holy and eternal Fellowship with him, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. This, some may object, is not the Way to increase and multiply you as to Number; but it is, and must be allowed to be, the best, nay, the only Way, to establish and increase a Communion of Saints, or a true and visible Church of Christ among Men; and such a Society, or Church of living Stones, tho' ever so few in Number, thus knit together, and made perfect in one, is infinitely more to be desired than ever so great a Multitude of such as, while they

they come together into one Place, and perhaps appear outwardly to partake of the visible Signs or Symbols of our Lord's most blessed Body and Blood, are yet so far from eating the Lord's Supper, that they are, at the same Time, weak and sickly, and at length actually perish thro' Want of that spiritual Food and Sustenance, which strengthens and restores to perfect Health and Life, as many as are made Partakers of it. Seeing then that these Things are so, How ought the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord's House, to weep between the Porch and the Altar, and to cry aloud Day and Night continually? Oh, that the Lord would, at this Time, restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*! Oh, that he would now come and visit his Temple! Oh, that he would now build up the old waste Places of his holy City, and lay again the Foundations thereof, that they may no more be moved, at any Time, from henceforth, even for ever! Oh, all ye Watchmen that are set upon the Walls of *Jerusalem*, and all ye that make Mention of the Lord, I beseech you, I charge you, by the long Sufferings, and by the loving Kindness of the Lord, that ye keep not still Silence; that ye give him no Rest, till he turn again, and make the Place of his Feet glorious; yea, till he establish the Place of his Holiness in perfect Beauty, and make *Jerusalem* a Praise among all Nations, and his Temple therein the Excellency and Glory of all the Earth!

This, this, my Brethren, is the End of your calling and coming together, even that God may be glorified in you, and by you also in many others, when they shall be made to rejoice

with you, and you with them, in the common Salvation of our one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: And it is this very End for which the World, and we, and all Things in it, are and were created by the same eternal Word of God, and by the Breath of his Mouth, *that is*, his holy Spirit. The new Creation, Regeneration, or Restitution of all Things, however accounted as a Thing of no Concern, or even as Matter of Madneis by many, I trust, is in some Measure begun to be actually experienced, and will be carried on, and at length consummated and made perfect in you, thro' the effectual working of that mighty Power of our Lord, whereby he is able to make all Things like unto himself!

Whosoever refuses to receive this faithful Testimony, *Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* And this is in a more real and absolute Sense than any Words of Man can fully declare; he is condemned already, as making God a Liar, because he hath not believed in the Name or Nature of his only begotten Son; for by him alone it is, and thro' Faith in this his Name or Nature, that all as many as receive him have Power to become the Sons of God, or receive that Spirit of his Son into their Hearts, whereby they cry unto him, *Abba, Father!* Whosoever knoweth not this, by a living, actual, and experimental Knowledge, knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; for it is founded on the very first Principle of all revealed Religion, which is also in a Manner most evident even to the naked and diseased Eye of corrupted Reason, *namely, That Man is not*
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now in that perfect and glorious State wherein he must necessarily have been formed at first, by an all perfect and glorious Creator ; but that we are fallen from this, or become dead in *Adam* ; and that therefore we must necessarily be a-new created, born, or made alive again, and that in Christ, ere we can enjoy that blessed Union and Communion with God, wherein consisteth our eternal Life.

The only Way to this, is Faith in the Name or Nature of Jesus Christ. Faith, as contradistinguished to (tho' necessarily productive of) good Works. *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; whosoever believeth in me, tho' he were dead, (as we all are in Adam) yet shall he live ; nay more, † he is passed from Death unto Life, saith Christ himself ; and he that hath received his Testimony, hath set to his Seal that God is true.* On all Accounts, therefore, I cannot but think it my bounden Duty, as I am able, always to exhort you earnestly to contend for the Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, according to the Scriptures, and the Articles of our Church ; and especially, at this Time, when there are so many false Prophets, and Spirits of Antichrist, gone out into the World ††. For it is most certain, that the Generality of our modern Prophets or Preachers, even the most zealous of them, are no better than the *Pharisees* of old, or the *Papists* of the present Time, while they teach and preach, not Jesus Christ and him crucified, but themselves, or their own Righteousness, as the Way of Salvation ; and therefore, tho I bear them Record, that they have a Zeal of God, yet
 ¶ I must

† John v. 24.

‡ John iii. 33.

†† John iv. 1. 3.

I must needs profess, at the same Time, that it is not according to Knowledge ; for they being ignorant of the Righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God ; and therefore have *they* not attained to the Law of Righteousness, because they *sought it* not by Faith, but, as it were, by the Works of the Law ‡.

This perhaps may be rashly condemned by some, as a rash and uncharitable Censure, while they having Eyes see not, and Ears hear not, neither understand ; but every candid and christian Reader will most readily acquit me, if thus censured for Want of Candour, while he considers, that one who has been reputed the most orthodox Prelate in the Kingdom, in a late *pastoral Letter*, advises his Clergy so to explain the Doctrine of Justification in the Sight of God by Faith *only*, as to make good Works *also*, a *necessary Condition* of the same. Such Advice, from a *Roman* Cardinal, would have been no more than what we might have expected, but from a Bishop of the Church of *England*, is indeed surprising, and much to be lamented.

God forbid, my Brethren, that you should so learn Christ : If the *Scriptures* are *true*, *such Doctrine* must be absolutely *false* ; for those lively Oracles no where declare good Works to be a necessary Condition of our Justification in the Sight of God ; on the contrary, they every where affirm, that Salvation is the free Gift of God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord ; that we are saved by Grace thro' Faith ; and that, not of
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‡ *Rom.* ix. 32. and x. 3.

ourselves, or of Works, lest any Man should boast. No, my Brethren, in the great Mystery of Man's Redemption by Jesus Christ, Boasting is intirely excluded; so that we must by no Means expect Salvation at God's Hands, either in whole or in Part, as if it were to be obtained by Virtue of any, or all the Works of Righteousness, which we have done, or ever shall, or can do; for this were to deny and renounce the *Lord our Righteousness*. But we hope better Things of you, Brethren, even the Things that accompany Salvation; and that you will heartily embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which is freely *given* us in our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures, and that Form of sound Words contained in the eleventh Article of our Church, which is, that we are accounted righteous before God, *only* for the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by Faith*, and not for our own Works or Deservings.

Now, nothing is more plain than † *to him that worketh is the Reward not reckoned of Grace, (that is, as a free Gift) but of Debt, that is, as Wages justly become due to him.* And again, ‡ *If by Grace (that is, by or thro' Faith, which is the free Gift of God) then is it no more of Works; otherways Grace is no more Grace.* So that hereby it is most evident, that whosoever teacheth Men the Doctrine of Justification, †† *so* as to leave no Doubt upon your Minds, whether good Works are a *necessary Condition* of the same, if he obstinately continueth *so* to do and teach, must

† Rom. iv. 4. ‡ Rom. xi. 6. †† See Bishop
of London's Pastoral Letter, latter Part.

must needs be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, *that is*, he shall have neither Lot nor Portion therein, for his Heart is not *right* in the Sight of God; he hath no Part in that Righteousness which exceedeth the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, even that which is the free Gift or Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation thro' the Faith of Jesus Christ our Lord †.

However, I will yet rejoice in Hope, that he also, whoever he be, that thus deceiveth others, because he is himself deceived, and drawn aside from the uniform Profession of the Faith once delivered to the Saints, will, in due Time, by a blessed Experience, be convinced with us, and made a Partaker of the same Grace also, whereby we are taught that good Works are indeed the *necessary Consequence*, tho' by no Means the *Condition* of our Justification in the Sight of God. Let us, my Brethren, in the mean Time, while we thus earnestly pray for all Mankind, with all Thankfulness, endeavour to maintain a continual Remembrance of this one Thing, *namely*, that as the Law, or Covenant of Works, saith, † *Do this, and thou shalt live*, but, at the same Time, addeth also, †† *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them*; so the Gospel, from Adam even to Abraham, and from Jesus Christ even unto the End of the World, constantly declareth on the contrary, †† *That the Just shall live by Faith*; ††† *that Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness, to every one that*

† Phil. iii. 9.

‡ Luke x. 28, 29.

†† Gal. iii. 10, 12.

†† Gal. iii. 11.

††† Rom. x. 4.

that believeth; and therefore was he rightly named JESUS, *the Lord our Righteousness*; and this his Doctrine, called the GOSPEL, or glad Tidings of Peace from God, and Reconciliation wrought with him, thro' the same Jesus Christ, or Saviour anointed (thus to be) our Lord and our God!

Christ, by his *own* Sacrifice of himself *once* offered, hath for ever put away Sin, * *and perfected all them that are sanctified thro' Faith in him, by not imputing their Trespases unto them; for where Remission of these is, there is no more Offering for Sin*: He hath fulfilled all Righteousness for us, and with the inestimable Price of his most precious Blood, the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, (the only Principle of eternal Life) hath purchased and procured for us our perfect Liberty, which he now as freely giveth unto us, as he once laid down his Life for us; *that is*, without any Respect had to any Works of Righteousness done by us, whether past, present, or to come. This is the constant Doctrine of the Scriptures of Truth, and of the whole Catholick Church of God; and therefore, to use the Words of our own in the forementioned Article, 'That we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of Comfort.' Observe, my Brethren, that we are justified by or thro' Faith, and not for Faith; because Faith is only the Means or Instrument whereby the whole Righteousness of Jesus Christ is applied to the Soul of a Sinner: And whosoever does thus believe with his whole Heart, thereby *setting to his Seal that God is true*, may be fully assured that his Pardon is then also sealed in Heaven, and

* Heb. ix. 26. and x. 14, 17, 18.

and this notwithstanding he has lived in an open Breach of God's Commandments all his Time before.

Believe, said the Apostle to trembling Jaylor, *and thou shalt be saved*, * *if thou believest with all thine Heart*; † *thou mayst be baptized*, was the Answer of Philip to the Eunuch; for *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*; ‡ *and whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World*; for this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? He alone it is that doth not commit Sin, for the Seed of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. Thus he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself; but he that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son. And this is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son.

By all this it may be seen, that the Faith which we teach and preach according to the Scriptures, is not like that which is too commonly taught, a mere formal Assent (with the Lips only, or with the Imagination at most) to certain Things, as credible, and related by credible Persons; for the Devils themselves do thus believe, yet tremble! but it is **THAT** †† Knowledge of him who hath called us by his own Spirit and Power, thro' which is given unto us all Things that pertain unto a Life of Godliness, and whereby we are made Partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the

* Acts xvi. 31.

† Acts viii. 37.

‡ John v. 1. &c.

†† 2 Pet. i. 3, 4.

the Corruption that is in the World thro' Lust. It is no less, in Effect, than that active and most powerful Principle of † our Life which is bid with Christ in God, and which, when he is made to appear, will also make us to appear with him in Glory!

Do we then (as we be slanderously reported) make void the Law thro' the Faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the Law. For we say, (and saith not the Scripture the same also?) that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked One toucheth him not †.*

So far are we from agreeing with any Doctrines like those call'd *Antinomian*, or *Solifidian*, if such there be, as encourage to Sin that Grace may abound, that, on the contrary, we constantly affirm, that *they who have believed on God, will be most careful to maintain good Works*; that every one that ‡ hath known and believed the Love that God hath to him, will love God, because he hath first loved him; and, for the same Cause, will love his Brother also, and freely forgive every one that trespasses against him, even as he hath found that God, for Christ's Sake, hath so forgiven him. Thus, whosoever hath Faith will most surely** shew forth this his Faith by his Works; and hereby will he also be justified, even before the Sons of Man, as well as in the Sight of his Father who seeth in secret, and will one Day reward him openly ††: And yet, as he doth not any of his Works to be seen of Men, so neither doth he them in order to justify himself in the Sight of God;

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† Col. iii. 3.

* Rom. iii. 8, 31.

† 1 John v. 18.

‡† 1 John iv. 16, 19, &c. ** James ii. 18 †† Matth. vi. 6

God ; but they are the natural and necessary Effects and Signs of his Faith, which thus worketh by Love, and, like a Tree of Life, produceth all manner of good Fruits to the Glory and Praise of God.

You see, my Brethren, this is a Topick I love to dwell upon; a divine Fire kindles in my Heart whilst I am musing on it, and writing to you about it ; and I should here enlarge much more, had I not with this sent over a Sermon intitled, *What think ye of Christ ?* in which this Subject is handled more fully, and therefore to that I refer you.

I cannot better proceed than by exhorting you to a Spirit of universal Love. Why should Bigotry or Party-Zeal be so much as once named amongst the Followers of Jesus Christ ? Our Lord was a Stranger to it. Whosoever did the Will of his Father, the same was his Brother, his Sister, and Mother. Wherever he saw the Marks of true Faith, tho' in a Centurion, or a *Syro-Phenician*, who were Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Israel*, and Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, how did he publish and commend it ? Be Followers then of him, my Brethren, and love all who love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity and Truth, altho' they should not as yet, in every Thing, agree to follow him with us. *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, the Self-righteous and Free-thinkers of this Generation, all Children of the Devil, whether rich or poor, high or low, however different in other Respects, yet agree in this one Thing, *viz.* to conspire against the Lord, and against his Christ. Why should not the Children of God, notwithstanding their little Differences, unite in one common Interest against spi-
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ritual Wickednesses in high Places? Oh that all that call themselves Christians were thus minded! How should we see the Kingdom of Christ come with Power, and Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven! From the Beginning it hath been his Policy to divide Christians into Sects and Parties, hoping thereby not only to weaken their Interest, but to make them believe that Religion wholly consisted in being of this or that parricular Communion! And this Subtilty of that old Serpent has so prevailed, that tho' we all profess to hold *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, yet Numbers look upon those that differ from them, and that only in Externals, almost as Creatures of another Species, and forbid us with such even to eat. This was once the State of the *Jewish*, as it is now of the *Christian Church*; but God shewed his Dislike of such a Temper, by convincing *Peter*, in a miraculous Manner, that he was henceforward to call *nothing common or unclean*, but freely to converse with *all who feared him, and worked Righteousness*, for that all such were accepted of him. My Brethren, be not you disobedient to this heavenly Vision: For our Sakes no doubt it was written, and for as many as the Lord our God shall call. The Self-righteous, and perhaps some who are weak in Faith, will censure and condemn your Conduct, (as the Brethren did *Peter's*) when they espy out your free Conversation in Christ; but *Peter* has furnished you with an Answer. *Forasmuch as God has given to them the like Gift as to us who believed on Jesus, what are we that we should withstand God?* How dare we make a Difference when God has made none? How dare we not
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freely converse with those who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? and, for the Father's sake, love every one that is indeed born of God, as his dear Children?

Further, my Brethren, content not yourselves with reading, singing, and praying together, but set some Time apart to * confess your Faults, and communicate your Experiences one to another. For want of this, (which I take to be one chief Design of private Meetings) most of the old Societies in *London*, I fear, are sunk into a dead Formality, and have only a Name to live. They meet on a *Sunday Evening*, read a Chapter, and sing a Psalm, but seldom, if ever, acquaint each other with the Operations of God's Spirit upon their Souls, notwithstanding this was the great End and Intention of those who first begun these Societies, and yet remains an Order in many of them. Hence it is that they have only the Form of Godliness left amongst them, and continue utter Strangers to the Power of it, or the State of one another's Hearts: And indeed how Christian Love, or the Power of Religion, can subsist in such a lukewarm and superficial Way of proceeding, is very hard to conceive. My Brethren, let not your coming together be *thus* altogether in vain; but plainly and freely tell one another what God has done for your Souls. To this End, you who are not already so united, would do well to form yourselves, as others have done, into little Companies of Four or Five each, and meet once a Week, to tell each other what is in your Hearts, that you may then also pray for and comfort each other, as need shall require. None but those who have experienc'd

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it can tell the unspeakable Advantage of such an Union and Communion of Souls. By this Means brotherly Love will be excited and increased amongst you, and you will learn to watch over one another for Good. This will teach you the better how to pray, and give Thanks also for each other, in your private Retirements, and happily prevent and deliver you from many Snares of the Devil; for Satan loves solitary Virtue, but dares not tempt him who he knows will discover his Devices to his Brethren. Besides, this is a most effectual Means for each to try the Sincerity of his own Heart, as well as that of others. No one, I think, that truly loves his own Soul, and his Brethren as himself, will be shy of opening his Heart, in order to have their Advice, Reproof, Admonition, and Prayers, as Occasions require. A sincere Person will esteem it one of the greatest Blessings; nor do I know a better Means in the World to keep Hypocrisy out from amongst you. *Pharisees* and Unbelievers will pray, read, and sing Psalms, but none, save an *Israelite* indeed, will endure to have his Heart searched out. *He that hath Ears to hear let him hear!*

Finally, my Brethren, expect a large Share of Contempt; for Christ's Servants were always the World's Fools. * *As for this Sect, or Heresy, said the Jews to Paul, we know that is every where spoken against; and that † all of this Way (which he himself had persecuted even unto Death for this Cause) were called Hereticks, he confesses in his Defence made before Felix*. Thus were the Disciples of the Lord treated in the Infancy of the Church;*

* *Acts* xxviii. 22. † *Acts* ix. 2. xxii. 40. * *Acts* xxiv. 14.

Church; and as it was formerly, so it is and will be now. In our Days, to be a true Christian, is really to become scandalous. † *If you were of the World, the World would love its own; but if you are not of the World, but Christ has chosen you out of the World, for this very Cause the World will most surely hate you.* However it may seem strange to the natural Man, yet there never was a true Saint who was not, like his Saviour, accounted beside himself: And they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must, to the End of Time, suffer Persecution for his Name's Sake.

But God forbid, my Brethren, that a little Contempt, nay, all the Contempt in the World, should any ways move you away from your steadfast Profession of the Hope of the Gospel ‡. Our Lord was despised before us; and you know the Servant must not presume to be above his Master: No, it is sufficient if he be, as his Master, made perfect thro' Sufferings. Be steadfast therefore, my Brethren, quit yourselves like Men; be strong, yea, *be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might!*

You see, my Brethren, I have confined myself to such Particulars as relate to the improving your Societies, and making them truly Christian. I hope you will, in like manner, take heed to your Ways in common Life, and never give the Adversary Room (justly) to speak reproachfully of your Conduct. My Brethren, the Eyes of all Men are upon you. Indeed it highly concerns you to *walk exceeding circumspectly towards those that are without.* I am sure you will not be offended, if, out of Love, I remind you to per-
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† John xv. 19.

‡ Col. i. 23.

form all relative Duties with the utmost Chearfulness, and a single Eye to the Glory of God. Let your Obedience be constant, universal, and uniform, founded on a living Faith in Christ Jesus your Saviour, that *by well doing you may put to Silence* the ignorant Slanders of foolish and evil Men. Let your Speech, and every Thing you do, betray whose Disciples you are: Confess your Lord publicly before Men, and be not afraid to tell those that have Ears to hear, what God has done for your Souls. It is good to keep close the Secrets of a King, but it is honourable to reveal the Works of the Almighty. *Above all Things, my Brethren, have fervent Charity among yourselves. Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. Be pitiful, be courteous, be tender-hearted; and, when a Brother is overtaken in a Fault, shew that you are spiritual, by restoring him in the Spirit of Meekness.* Let it be said of you as of the primitive Saints, 'See how these Christians LOVE one another!'

Be subject to every Ordinance of God; but remember always, that *the Kingdom of God is within you, and cannot consist in Meat and Drink, or any Thing without you, but in Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost:* And therefore, that Day is to be accounted lost, wherein you are not improved in some of these. The *Spiritual Life*, like the Natural, is begun in some *one* Instant of Time; but is also, like *that*, carried to Perfection Day by Day continually, until it be brought even *unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ* *: Let us therefore,

* Eph. iv. 13.

fore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ; and then, if in any Thing ye be otherways minded, God shall also reveal even this unto you.

Thus, my Brethren, out of the Fulness of my Heart have I wrote unto you. Many of you I never yet saw, and perhaps never may see, in the Flesh. However, I love you all in the Bowels of Jesus Christ, and intreat your Prayers for me, whilst I heartily beseech God to bless what his Spirit has enabled me to write unto you, and to *sanctify* your whole Spirits, Souls, and Bodies, and preserve you blameless until the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his Saints ! Then, I trust, all Tears shall be wiped away from our Eyes, and we shall together enjoy an ever blessed Eternity, in singing Praises unto him that sitteth up-
on the Throne. and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever !

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy ; to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever. Amen.

Glory be to God in the Highest ; on Earth
Peace ; Good-will towards Men !

From on Board the *Elisabeth*,
Captain *Stevenson*, bound
from *London* to *Philadelphia*,
September 22. 1739.

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